

Message Text

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SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC BRIEF ON NEW MALAGASY CHIEF OF STATE
DIDIER RATSIRAKA

REF: TANANARIVE 1060

DIDIER RATSIRAKA, NEW CHIEF OF STATE OF THE MALAGASY REPUBLIC WAS BORN NOVEMBER 4, 1939, NEAR THE COASTAL CITY OF TAMATAVE. AFTER STUDY AT FRENCH SCHOOLS IN TANANARIVE AND IN PARIS, HE BECAME A NAVAL CADET AT THE FRENCH NAVAL ACADEMY IN BREST. ACCORDING TO HIS BIOGRAPHY PUBLISHED IN THE OFFICIAL MALAGASY PRESS SERVICE, "MAD-PRESSE" JUNE 16, HE WAS FIRST IN HIS CLASS AT THE NAVAL ACADEMY. AFTER GRADUATION, HE JOINED THE NEW MALAGASY NAVY, RISING TO THE GRADE OF COMMANDER IN 1972. FROM 1970 TO 1972 RASIRAKA SERVED AS MILITARY ATTACHE AT THE MALAGASY EMBASSY IN PARIS.

2. AFTER STUDENT UPRISINGS TOPPLED THE 13-YEAR OLD REGIME OF PRESIDENT TSIRANANA IN MAY 1972, MADAGASCAR'S NEW HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, GEN. RAMANANTSOA, NAMED RATSIRAKA MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. PROMOTED TO CAPITAIN DE FREGATE IN LATE 1972, RATSIRAKA SOON BECAME ONE OF THE BEST-KNOWN MEMBERS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT FOR HIS ROLE IN SUCCESSFULLY RE-NEGOTIATING MADAGASCAR'S TREATIES WITH FRANCE. IN 1973 HE LED A MALAGASY DELEGATION TO PARIS WHICH REACHED AGREEMENTS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE TO WITHZEAW MADAGASCAR FROM THE FRANC ZONE, TO
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WITHDRAW FRENCH GROUND AND AIR TROOPS FROM MADAGASCAR,

TO CONVERT THE LARGE NAVAL BASE AT DIEGO SUAREZ FROM A FRENCH TO A MALAGASY BASE, AND TO TURN OVER FRENCH EMBASSY PROPERTY IN TANANARIVE TO THE MALAGASY REPUBLIC. AS ONE OF HIS FIRST ACTS AS FOREIGN MINISTER, RATSIRAKA ALSO BROKE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN MADAGASCAR AND THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA.

3. PURSUING A FOREIGN POLICY THAT HE HAS DESCRIBED AS "OMNIDIRECTIONAL", RATSIRAKA IN 1972 AND 1973 MADE OFFICIALS VISITS TO THE USSR, THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, AND NORTH KOREA. THESE TRIPS LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THESE COUNTRIES, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RESIDENT DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS OF THE USSR AND THE PRC IN TANANARIVE. HE HAS ALSO PAID SEVERAL VISITS TO ALGERIA. IN 1974 RATSIRAKA VISITED CHINA (FOR THE SECOND TIME), YUGOSLAVIA, AND CUBA. IN DIRECTING MADAGASCAR'S FOREIGN POLICY, RATSIRAKA HAS LED HIS COUNTRY FIRMLY INTO THE BLOC OF THE SO-CALLED "NON-ALIGNED" NATIONS.

4. ACCORDING TO HIS BIOGRAPHY PUOLISHED IN MADA-GASCAR-PRESS JUNE 16, RATISRAKA IS "AN AUTHENTIC MALAGASY PATRIOT" AND AN ADMIRER OF CHARLES DE GAULLE, MAO TSE-TUNG, AND KIM IL SUNG. HE IS MARRIED AND HAS THREE CHILDREN.
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